

Application Number: MC/17/1566

Site Address: FORMER TESCO STORE THE BROOK CHATHAM ME4 4NZ

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

Change of use of remaining part of former Tesco Store from retail use class A1 to gymnasium use class D2 with no external changes.

Relevant Planning History

MC/15/4249	Sub-division of existing building to form two units with associated external alterations Approved 19 February 2016
78/589/C	Details pursuant to outline for internal alterations to provide approx. addition 19,000 sq ft. Approved 6 March 1980
78/589/B	Internal alterations to existing approved development to provide approx. addition 19,000 sq ft. Approved 21 September 1979
78/589/A	The erection of market hall, retail store and multi-storey car park Approved 14 March 1979
78/589	Outline permission for the erection of market hall, retail store and multi-storey car park Approved 9 August 1978

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

No letters of representation have been received

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003. The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background and principle

The former Tesco Superstore was vacated in 2015, following over 30 years of trading. In 2015 an application to subdivide the store to form two units was approved. Subsequently Go Outdoors moved into one half leaving the remaining unit vacant. The current application advises that despite active marketing of the vacant unit by a well established retail and commercial agency there has been no interest from retail occupiers, but there has been interest from a gym operator, as such an application for a change of use from A1 to D2 has been applied for.

The proposed change of use of the premises applies to the northern section of the building occupying approx. 3,532sqm (including the mezzanine floor).

The site is within the main retailing core as identified by policies R1 and R2, which seek the protection of comparison and convenience retailing and where proposals for development, which would undermine the strategy for the vitality or viability of Chatham Town Centre, will not be permitted. However Policy S5 (relating to Chatham Town Centre to be developed as "Medway's City Centre") also encourages initiatives that enhance the attraction of the town centre, whilst Policies R11 and L2 encourage leisure and entertainment uses, these uses will be permitted subject to certain criteria. Policy L2 advises that new leisure facilities within use classes D1 and D2 will be permitted within or in the edge of town centres.

The proposal would bring into use a long term vacant building. The presence of a gym at this location would help to improve the vitality and viability of this part of the High Street by introducing an increase footfall, which would have a beneficial impact in terms of stemming the decline. In addition to this the application site lends itself to being used as a gym as opposed to retail as there is a lack of commercial frontage onto the Brook. The proposals are therefore considered on principle acceptable to Policy L2 of the Local Plan.

Design and Streetscene

No external changes are proposed as part of this application as such the application is considered to accord with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Neighbouring Amenity

The proposal falls to be assessed against Policies BNE2 and L2 of the Local Plan, in terms of the impact of the proposal on the occupiers of neighbouring residential and commercial premises. It is considered that the principal issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of neighbouring residents in terms of noise and general disturbance. This is a location with a mix of existing commercial uses along a busy High Street location and one of the major thoroughfares through the Medway Towns.

While the use of the property as a gym could use amplified music the uses in the immediate vicinity include the multi storey 'Market Hall' car park and a retail warehouse occupied by HomePlus furniture and the adjacent neighbour Go Outdoors, none of which are noise sensitive retailers. The nearest residential properties and noise sensitive retailers are located on the opposite side of Upbury Way to the east set approx. 20m from the site boundary. Given the highly commercial setting within Chatham Town Centre, the predominant commercial nature of the surrounding uses, the distance to the closest

residential properties and with conditions to control noise from the development and restrict the opening hours to 06:00 to 23:00 Monday to Sunday the development. Subject to these conditions the proposal is considered acceptable when assessed against Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan.

Highways

There is ample parking in the multi storey carpark to the rear of the site, additionally there are bus stops on the High Street and the train station is within walking distance. On this basis, no objection is raised in regard to the proposal on highways grounds and is considered to be in accordance with Policies T1 and T13 of the Local Plan.

Local Finance Considerations

None relevant to this application.

Conclusions and Reasons for this Recommendation

It is considered that the proposal results in a form of development that is in accordance with the policies of the adopted Local Plan, which seeks to encourage the vitality and viability of Town Centres whilst maintaining the character of the street scene and remove the harm that a vacant unit causes. The proposed development does not adversely affect the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and bearing all of the above in mind the above appraisal the proposal is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

See draft decision notice